

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA
MONROE DIVISION

**JOSEPH T. EZELL
LA. DOC #448905
VS.**

**CIVIL ACTION NO. 3:11-cv-2179
SECTION P**

MRS. DANA, ET AL.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE KAREN L. HAYES

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Pro se plaintiff Joseph T. Ezell, proceeding *in forma pauperis*, filed the instant civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983 on December 20, 2011. Plaintiff is an inmate in the custody of Louisiana's Department of Public Safety and Corrections. He is incarcerated at the Caldwell Correctional Center, Grayson, Louisiana; however, he complains that he was denied appropriate medical care while he was imprisoned at the Franklin Parish Corrections Center (FPCC), Winnsboro, Louisiana. Plaintiff sued Nurse Dana, Captain Malcolm, Warden Chad Lee and Officer Terry Mesllin; he prayed for damages totaling \$500,000. This matter has been referred to the undersigned for review, report, and recommendation in accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §636 and the standing orders of the Court. For the following reasons it is recommended that the complaint be **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE** for failing to state a claim for which relief may be granted.

Background

On November 1, 2011, plaintiff had hernia surgery at the E.A. Conway Hospital. Pain medication was prescribed at discharge. Plaintiff was apparently returned to FPCC. According to plaintiff, due to Nurse Dana's negligence, the medication was not received. Plaintiff returned to the hospital on November 10, 2011, because of swelling which he attributes to Nurse Dana's negligence.

Plaintiff filed a grievance and, as a result of having filed the grievance, on November 11, 2011, he started receiving his medication. On December 13, 2011, Warden Lee addressed plaintiff's grievance and promised trustee status or work release if plaintiff withdrew the grievance. Less than one week later, plaintiff filed the instant complaint.

Law and Analysis

1. Screening

When a prisoner is allowed to proceed *in forma pauperis* in a suit against an officer or employee of a governmental entity pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983, the court is obliged to evaluate the complaint and dismiss it without service of process if it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C.1915A; 28 U.S.C.1915(e)(2). *Ali v. Higgs*, 892 F.2d 438, 440 (5th Cir.1990).

A civil rights complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted if it appears that no relief could be granted under any set of facts that could be proven consistent with the allegations of the complaint. Of course, in making this determination, the court must assume that all of the plaintiff's factual allegations are true. *Bradley v. Puckett*, 157 F.3d 1022, 1025 (5th Cir.1998).

A hearing need not be conducted for every *pro se* complaint. *Wilson v. Barrientos*, 926 F.2d 480, 483 n. 4 (5th Cir.1991). A district court may dismiss a prisoner's civil rights complaint as frivolous based upon the complaint and exhibits alone. *Green v. McKaskle*, 788 F.2d 1116, 1120 (5th Cir.1986).

District courts must construe *in forma pauperis* complaints liberally, but they are given broad discretion in determining when such complaints are frivolous. *Macias v. Raul A. (Unknown) Badge No. 153*, 23 F.3d 94, 97 (5th Cir.1994).

A civil rights plaintiff must support his claims with specific facts demonstrating a constitutional deprivation and may not simply rely on conclusory allegations.. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, ____ U.S. ___, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 1949, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009); *Schultea v. Wood*, 47 F.3d 1427, 1433 (5th Cir.1995). Furthermore, a district court is bound by the allegations in a plaintiff's complaint and is "not free to speculate that the plaintiff 'might' be able to state a claim if given yet another opportunity to add more facts to the complaint." *Macias v. Raul A. (Unknown) Badge No. 153*, 23 F.3d at 97.

Courts are not only vested with the authority to dismiss a claim based on an indisputably meritless legal theory, but are also afforded the unusual power to pierce the veil of the factual allegations and dismiss those claims whose factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327, 109 S.Ct. 1827, 104 L.Ed.2d 338 (1989).

Plaintiff has filed an original complaint outlining the legal basis of his claim and supporting that claim with the facts known to him. Further amendment is unnecessary.

2. Medical Care

The constitutional right of a convicted prisoner to safe conditions of confinement and prompt and adequate medical care is based upon the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment. Rights guaranteed under the Eighth Amendment are violated only if the defendants act with deliberate indifference to a substantial risk of serious harm which results in injury. Deliberate indifference requires that the defendants have subjective knowledge of the risk of harm. Mere negligence or a failure to act reasonably is not enough. The defendants must have the subjective intent to cause harm. *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104, 97 S.Ct. 285, 50 L.Ed.2d 251 (1976).

Thus, in order to establish an actionable constitutional violation a plaintiff must allege facts

tending to establish that the defendants were deliberately indifferent to his serious medical needs and safety. *Thompson v. Upshur County, Texas*, 245 F.3d 447, 457 (5th Cir.2001). A showing of deliberate indifference with regard to medical treatment requires the inmate to submit evidence that prison officials “ ‘refused to treat him, ignored his complaints, intentionally treated him incorrectly, or engaged in any similar conduct that would clearly evince a wanton disregard for any serious medical needs.’ ” *Domino v. Texas Dep’t of Criminal Justice*, 239 F.3d 752, 756 (5th Cir.2001) (citation omitted). Plaintiff’s pleadings fall far short of alleging facts sufficient to establish deliberate indifference on the part of any of the named defendants or any of the other corrections officers or healthcare officials identified in his pleadings.

Plaintiff concedes that the failure to timely provide medication was the result of negligence on the part of Nurse Dana. To the extent that the pleadings allege negligence or even malpractice on the part of the defendants with regard to his medical care claim, plaintiff fails to state a claim for which relief may be granted since deliberate indifference is not equivalent to negligence. Put simply, deliberate indifference “describes a state of mind more blameworthy than negligence.” *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 835, 114 S.Ct. 1970, 128 L.Ed.2d 811 (1994). Under the deliberate indifference standard, it is not sufficient that defendants should have known of a substantial risk; they must have actual knowledge of the risk and must thereafter have ignored it. In other words, a civil rights plaintiff must allege and prove that each of the defendants knew of and then disregarded an excessive risk of injury to him, and that they were both aware of the facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm existed, and that they drew that inference. *Id.* at 837.

Further, plaintiff admitted that immediately upon filing his grievance, he began to receive

his medication. Clearly, such facts fail to establish deliberate indifference. Since plaintiff has neither alleged nor established deliberate indifference, his complaint of negligence and malpractice fails to state a claim for which relief may be granted and dismissal on that basis is appropriate.

Conclusion and Recommendation

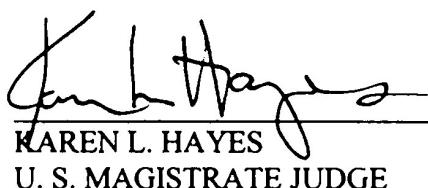
Therefore

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT plaintiff's civil rights complaint be **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE** for failing to state a claim for which relief may be granted.

Under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1)(C) and Rule 72(b), parties aggrieved by this recommendation have fourteen (14) days from service of this report and recommendation to file specific, written objections with the Clerk of Court. A party may respond to another party's objections within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of any objections or response to the district judge at the time of filing.

Failure to file written objections to the proposed factual findings and/or the proposed legal conclusions reflected in this Report and Recommendation within fourteen (14) days following the date of its service, or within the time frame authorized by Fed.R.Civ.P. 6(b), shall bar an aggrieved party from attacking either the factual findings or the legal conclusions accepted by the District Court, except upon grounds of plain error. See, *Douglass v. United Services Automobile Association*, 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996).

In Chambers, Monroe, Louisiana, March 15, 2012.



KAREN L. HAYES
U. S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE